

I support media diversity

We are writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. It is our understanding that a responsibility of the FCC is to regulate the airwaves to serve the best interests of the public.

We DO NOT believe it is in the best interest of the citizens of our country to relax current regulations that prohibit a few large conglomerates from taking ownership of the communications industry. We STRONGLY believe the FCC needs to retain the current regulations.

It is of great concern to us to learn that employees of the FCC have, over the past several years, taken trips paid for by the very industry they are supposed to be regulating. At the very least, such actions give the "appearance" of collusion, and the proposed changes to FCC regulations suggest that these large corporations have indeed been successful in lobbying efforts.

Our democracy requires a diversity of ideas. We have only to view the evening news on the three major networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS to see that there is a sameness in what news is reported and how it is reported now. If these and other large cable news providers are given freedom to buy up greater shares of the telecommunications market, the opportunity for Americans to be exposed to a broad variety of opinions will decrease, and with it, our ability to make informed decisions. The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules as they stand.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, we strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. We think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Karen and John Sheek